

Bedwetting

How common is bedwetting?

Bedwetting is very common, but most people don't talk about it. It affects as many as 15% of children over the age of three. It is more common in boys than girls.

When a child has never been dry at night, it is called **primary bedwetting**. There is rarely a serious physical or emotional cause. It is sometimes called nighttime enuresis.

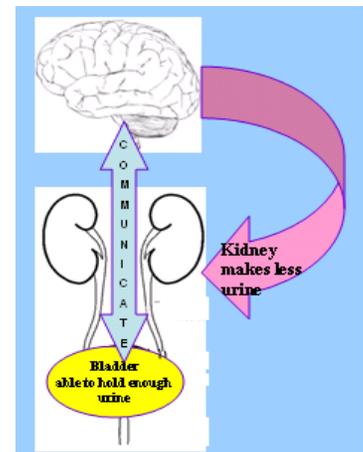
When a child who has been dry at night for at least six months starts to wet the bed, it is called **secondary bedwetting**.

What causes it?

Often, the exact cause is not known. It can be caused by an illness, such as a bladder infection. Bedwetting can also be an emotional reaction to changes in a child's life, such as problems at home or in school.

Kids do not wet the bed because they are lazy. Knowing when to go to the bathroom at night is hard work. Different parts of the body need to work together to stay dry at night. The **kidneys** limit how much urine is made at night so the bladder doesn't fill up. The **bladder** holds the urine that is made. The **brain** needs to know when the bladder is full so it can wake your child up or tell their bladder to hold the urine until morning. **There are a number of reasons children may wet the bed:**

1. It may run in the family. If both parents wet the bed when they were young, there is an 80% chance that your child will wet the bed. If one parent wet the bed, there is a 50% chance your child will wet the bed. Children often, stop wetting the bed at about the same age their parent(s) did, but not always.
2. Your child may be harder to wake up than other kids.
3. Your child's bladder may hold less urine at night than other kids.
4. Your child may not have enough of the anti-diuretic hormone (called ADH). It helps the kidneys make less urine at night so the bladder doesn't get full.
5. Diabetes or kidney disease can cause the body to make more urine. Sleep problems like sleep apnea may make it harder for the brain to act when the bladder is full. Kidney or bladder problems can cause bedwetting, but they are rare.
6. Some children who wet at night also wet during the day.
7. Kids with hard stools (constipation) are more likely to wet the bed.



How is it treated?

You will be asked questions about your child's health and history of bedwetting. We will do an exam and test your child's urine for an infection. Other tests may also be needed.

Most children who wet the bed will stop without any treatment. The age that this happens is different for each child. For some children and parents, knowing that there is no physical or emotional reason for the bedwetting is enough. They are willing to wait until it goes away on its own.

You may not want to wait. You and your child will need to work together. Talk with your child's provider about treatment. Treatment may include an alarm or medicine. Treatment will:

- Wake up your child's brain to go to the bathroom in the night.
- Help the bladder hold urine until morning.
- Decrease the amount of urine made at night.

Tips for success

There are many things you can do to help you succeed:

- **Be positive and help your child believe they can stay dry.** Wetting the bed is not your child's fault. Help your child take steps to avoid bedwetting. Praise your child for limiting fluids, taking medicine, and for using an alarm. Do not punish or tease your child for bedwetting. Punishment does not help.
- **Offer liquids during the day.** Your nurse or doctor will let you know how much your child should drink during the day. This helps the bladder learn to hold more urine. Your child will be less thirsty at night. Water also helps your child's stool be soft.
- **After supper, limit the amount your child drinks.** Drinks should be free of caffeine, chocolate, soda, and citrus. These drinks can bother the bladder.
- **Remind your child to use the toilet just before going to sleep.** Have your child use the toilet and then get ready for bed. Have your child try to go again a few minutes later. The bladder is really empty after going a few times. Children who read or watch TV for more than ½ hour before going to sleep should get up and go once more.
- **Help your child get enough sleep.** Children sleep more soundly when they are over tired. That makes it harder for them to notice when their bladders are full.
- **A nightlight may help** if your child is worried about getting up in the dark to go to the bathroom.
- **Have your child help take wet sheets off in the morning and put them in the laundry.** Make sure your child knows this isn't a punishment. You are helping your child be responsible.
- **Other than time, a bedwetting alarm is the only cure for bedwetting.** It helps the brain learn when the bladder is full. Your child learns to wake up and go to the bathroom or to hold the urine all night. This may take several months.
- **There are medicines that may help. They are only a treatment, not a cure.** Bedwetting may return once your child stops taking the medicine. Your doctor or nurse can talk with you about these medicines.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.